

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Virginia Cave Board  
November 20, 2010  
Richmond, Virginia**

**Virginia Cave Board Members Present**

Babs Bodin  
Dave Culver  
Dan Doctor  
Andrew Harrison  
Tom Lera  
Judy Molnar  
Barbara Moss  
Dave Socky

**Virginia Cave Board Members Not Present**

Meredith Hall Weberg  
John Holsinger  
Jesse Richardson

**DCR Staff Present**

Chris Hobson  
Roger Kirchen  
Wil Orndorff  
Steve Roble  
Larry Smith  
Tom Smith

**Others Present**

Joey Fagan, Cave Conservancy of the Virginias  
Gary Moss, National Speleological Society

**Call to Order**

Mr. Lera called the meeting to order at 12:45 PM and declared a quorum present.

**Introductions and Announcements**

Mr. Lera circulated a publisher's proof of his new book *Cave Post Offices* and introduced Mr. Fagan as a representative of the Cave Conservancy of the Virginias. He also stated that Governor McDonnell has recommended one re-appointment and two new appointments for the three VCB members whose terms ended in June 2010. The announcement of the names should be made soon.

**Approval of Minutes from the VCB Meeting of May 15, 2010**

MOTION: moved that the minutes from the VCB meeting of be accepted with Ms. Molnar's corrections.

SECOND: Mr. Socky seconded

VOTE: The motion passed unanimously.

**Treasury Report**

Mr. Larry Smith reported that, due to an accounting error, the \$1100 treasury balance previously

reported should have been \$2189 and that there have been no expenditures nor revenues.

## **Committee Reports**

### **1. Education Committee Report**

Ms. Moss reported that the next issue of the Cave Owners Newsletter is in process. Mr. Orndorff interjected that the VSS address list developed some 20 years ago should be updated with GIS technology, which requires staff/volunteers with the requisite skills, but that there should not be too many caves without ownership information; there are data layers to update and the process needs a realistic deadline.

The next newsletter will include articles on the state Karst Trail, Introduction of new Cave Board members, White Nose Syndrome update, Chairman's Update, Newsletter Going Paperless, and the Growing Communities on Karst seminar. There is a one-week turnaround for review, approval, and mailing once the articles are ready.

A 6-8 page newsletter with the current address list can be published for \$1100, so an electronic newsletter is being discussed as a cost-saving expedient. To transition to a paperless newsletter, the committee proposes sending a returnable postcard to the current list, wherein recipients can opt in to also receive alerts that the latest newsletter is available online and also emergency notices about sensitive cave/karst issues; DCR staff would maintain the list. There would be not be a limit on the size of the e-letter and links can send readers to other sites for lengthy articles.

### **2. Joint Technical Committee**

Mr. Orndorff reported that Virginia Stormwater Regulations are being drafted despite the fact that there is currently an online handbook available that was developed during the public comment period. He noted that some definitions of terminology can cause confusion, so VCB recommendations might be helpful in the direction that the regulations can take.

The Committee had considerable discussion of White Nose Syndrome (WNS) but announced that the full WNS update will be presented within the Karst Program report.

There is considerable active drilling for natural gas on the Marcellus Shale formation north of Virginia, but that here in Virginia drilling on the formation has to be very deep (7,000-8,000 feet down) in order to reach the fractures where the gas is stored, and requires horizontal drilling using a lot of sand and water to keep these fractures open. This process impacts karst areas as drilling requires identifying sources of water and then using and storing recovered water. There are no policy recommendations at the present time but specialists should draw maps that exhibit the drilling's impact on sensitive karst areas.

## **New Business**

### **Karst Program Report**

Mr. Orndorff reported that the Karst Program, cut from EPA funding support, continues to search

for new sources of funding.

A water quality issue has arisen concerning the Rockingham County landfill, where some landfill expansion areas have had some collapses. DEQ is facing a dilemma in deciding whether to shut down the landfill or not. Rockingham County subcontracted a dye trace study wherein dyes were injected on two areas within the expansion areas. The dyes were collected weeks later downstream, evidently because the water had been caught up in epikarst until it was flushed out by rains, a situation that clearly exhibits one of the problems associated with dye tracing and epikarst. Remediators hope to seal water in the affected areas from communication with the natural spring associated with the site.

White Nose Syndrome has not been detected at any additional sites since the last update, but this was not to be expected during the summer season, just during the winter hibernation. The response of the caving community to the WNS policy has been very supportive. Gray bats, which are especially susceptible to WNS, are being carefully monitored at several sites with a lot of recaptures of banded bats. Fall swarm work includes setting nets up at cave entrances to see which species are visiting selected caves during the fall season, but this visitation has small overlap with hibernating bats. The numbers of infected bats in all species are not very different from the previous year, except for little brown bats, whose numbers are down a lot. Weights are in the normal range, a little smaller in some. Wing condition is pretty good. Early hibernation studies generally show that at a given site during the second year of infection numbers are down less than expected (50%) and down 25% during the 3<sup>rd</sup> year, when weights are also generally better than at the 2<sup>nd</sup> year but there are fewer bats. It has also been noted that there seem to be many more females than males at these sites. Studies conducted during the next six months will tell a lot. A question posed was whether WNS is gender specific, but there is no evidence as yet that would answer this question. Males leave hibernacula later, so they may be exposed to the fungus longer and therefore suffer more fatalities from the disease.

Stormwater Management Regulations, in process since 2005, have been a very controversial topic. Stormwater management concerns land disturbance - impacts can be devastating - and is thus a nexus for cave/karst protection. The Leesburg Limestone Overlay is being handled at the county level, by the Board of Commissioners, which has instituted strict guidelines that would cause a lot of pushback in other places. Action item: Mr. Lera requested that VCB members send him comments for the VCB response to the controversy.

#### **Correspondence with British Firm**

Mr. Lera reported that he corresponded with the Iondale Group in Britain, who want to establish their first data collection center here in a Virginia cave; he responded that he advised them not to do so.

#### **Commission on Government Reform and Restructuring**

The Commission is tasked with making government smaller and smarter. The Simplification and Operations Committee initially considered eliminating VCB but is now considering merging it into another DCR board. Mr. Lera asked VCB members to send him comments that he will incorporate into a letter emphasizing the VCB's active role in promoting the governor's stated agenda.

#### **Election of Officers**

DISCUSSION: Mr. Lera asked if the current officers were agreeable to continuing to serve in their

current capacities; he received an affirmative response from Mr. Socky (Vice Chair) and Ms. Bodin (Secretary), and stated his own willingness to serve for one more year only.

MOTION: Ms. Moss moved that the current officers be re-elected for the year 2011.

SECOND: Mr. Harrison seconded the motion

VOTE: the motion passed unanimously.

### **Updates**

Ms. Bodin reported that Crystal Caverns at Hupp's Hill closed August 15, 2010, but that staff erected 12 permanent markers on the "How *Strata Shaped Strategy* Civil War/Karst Walking Trail" prior to the closure of Hupp's Hill Historic Park. Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation has signed an agreement with the Wayside Foundation to manage the site; Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation is in negotiations with VAR to open Crystal Caverns for education and preservation programs.

Ms. Molnar reported that Grand Caverns is staying open this winter and is planning for 2011-2012 Civil War Sesquicentennial events, including a dress ball and candlelight tours. Grand Caverns reports slow visitation currently but hopes that numbers will pick up during the holiday season.

DCR recognized Wil Orndorff with the Customer Service Award, one of ten Director awards given to exemplary employees within the agency.

Ms Molnar reported that the Virginia Living Museum in Newport News will host Evergreen Exhibitions' traveling exhibit "Masters of the Night: The True Story of Bats" from Jan 15 through May 8<sup>th</sup>. Bat Conservation International's founder, Dr. Merlin Tuttle, served as science consultant. Museum staff will add signage about the current status of White Nose Syndrome to update the exhibit and there are plans for several special events featuring live bat presentations to be held during its run.

Dan Doctor reported that the Town of Grottoes approved his request to sample speleothems and sediments in Grand Caverns and other caves on Cave Hill.

Mr. Fagan reported that he is working with the Town of Dayton on a DEQ grant application. Mr. Lera wrote a letter on behalf of the VCB in support of Mr. Leland Siler's proposal to VDEQ for funds to delineate and characterize the source(s) of the water that flows from Silver Lake Spring and which serves as Dayton's water supply.

### **Next Meeting**

The next VCB meeting will be March 12, 2011 at Grottoes Town Hall.

### **Adjournment**

MOTION: Ms. Moss moved that the meeting adjourn.

SECOND: Mr. Culver seconded the motion

VOTE: the motion passed unanimously at 2:46 PM